

RAC NOTES

*Arizona Bureau of Land Management
Resource Advisory Council Newsletter
February 2004, Number 12*

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, September 17, 2003

On September 17th, a RAC business meeting was convened at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix to focus primarily on getting public input and finalizing RAC recommendations on the Sustaining Working Landscapes initiative. Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director, welcomed the group and gave a summary of legislation, regulations, and statewide issues. She introduced Twinkle Thompson, National RAC Coordinator, who recently moved from Washington D.C. to Arizona to work closely with the 23 RACs in 11 western states and coordinate their efforts for the BLM Director. A synopsis of topics covered by Elaine Zielinski's report is as follows:

Wilderness Guidance: No new guidance has been issued by the Washington Office regarding the Secretary's Wilderness Settlement with the State of Utah and its application to BLM agency-wide. Arizona BLM land use planning efforts are addressing resource values and management prescriptions using tools such as Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, Visual Resource Management, and Travel Management designations.

Phelps Dodge Dos Pobres/San Juan

Project: The final environmental impact statement (FEIS) is under review by the

Washington Office and is expected to be released in the near future.

Governor's Military Facilities Task Force:

BLM will be involved in the Task Force to review impacts of population encroachment on military installations throughout the state. Bill Ruddick will be the BLM's liaison to the Task Force.

Las Cienegas Record of Decision (ROD):

Elaine was happy to announce that she signed the ROD on July 25, 2003, culminating a seven year planning process. She commended the efforts of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP) which was instrumental in developing the Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan (several RAC members participate in the SVPP).

Challenge Cost Share: The Department of the Interior announced the dedication of \$13 million in funding to leverage on the ground environmental projects with its partners. Eight Arizona BLM projects have been funded.

National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation

Strategy: BLM's draft strategy seeks to provide for the survival of the sage-grouse through management of its habitat on BLM lands throughout the west. Public comment was extended to November 1, 2003.

Healthy Forest Initiative: Recently Phoenix Field Office Manager Teri Raml signed the Environmental Assessment for the Weaver Mountain Fuels Treatment Project, which is part of the Healthy Forest Initiative.

Sustaining Working Landscape (SWL)

Initiative: Elaine thanked the Standards and

Guidelines working group for their efforts in developing draft recommendations on the SWL initiative. The BLM Director is looking forward to the results of the RAC deliberations.

Fire Season Status: Arizona had 360 wildfire actions for a total of 5,237 acres burned. About 355 of these were naturally ignited. Fast detection and response kept the impacts relatively small.

Fire Land Use Plan Amendment: The National Fire Policy will be incorporated in all Arizona BLM land use planning efforts. The Approved Plan Amendment and Decision Record should be published by late January 2004.

RAC Recognition and Awards: Elaine commended the contributions of five outgoing RAC members and presented each with a plaque citing BLM's appreciation for their dedication and leadership.

Next the RAC began discussion of the **Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative**. Bill Coulloudon, Rangeland Management Specialist, turned the meeting over to Lamar Smith who heads the Standards and Guidelines Working Group. On August 22nd, the Working Group met with BLM staff, reviewed RAC suggestions, drafted a [letter](#) to the State Director, and circulated it to the full RAC for additional comments. Today's meeting will solicit public comment and give the RAC an opportunity to further modify the draft letter. Lamar then fielded comments and suggestions from the RAC members. The draft letter was revised to address RAC member comments on coordination of the SWL concept with other resource management programs such as Off Highway Vehicles, recreation, and mining. Also, the RAC agreed to modify the draft letter to emphasize the involvement of the public, conservation organizations, and other groups

with interests or expertise in resource management. During the public comment period, the RAC heard a suggestion that BLM consider use of the San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area as a potential reserve common allotment. Also mentioned was the need to eliminate the surcharge imposed when a permittee sub-leases an allotment for grazing by outside cattle. Elimination of the surcharge would facilitate flexibility and enable permittees to allow temporary grazing by outside cattle during periods of excess forage. Another comment concerned the need to re-establish the Grazing District Advisory Boards composed of permittees, which were involved with the distribution of funds for range improvements. These boards could also help facilitate concepts contained in the Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative. After the public comment period, the RAC discussed how to incorporate the public's concerns into the draft letter. The draft language concerning Reserve Common Allotments (RCAs) was revised to say the concept has merit but there will likely be few opportunities to implement RCAs, and the issue of surcharges on grazing fees as a possible deterrent to flexibility in use of allotments should be discussed and clarified. The RAC also agreed to add language recommending BLM consider re-authorization of the original grazing advisory boards to advise BLM on expenditure of range improvement funds and implementation of the SWL initiative. These boards could include various affected interests and provide site specific experience and advice. After these changes were agreed to, the RAC voted to accept the letter as modified. The RAC's ability to listen, understand, and integrate the various comments from the public and fellow RAC members reflects positively on the strength of the RAC and its success in achieving common ground and consensus. The entire text of the RAC letter to the State

Director is attached as an enclosure to this edition of RAC Notes.

Next, Verna Glasmann, BLM Arizona Budget Officer, gave the RAC a presentation on **BLM's Budget Development Process**. She discussed the three year budget cycle, BLM's budget categories, and how the budget is tied to performance. One of the reasons for this presentation was to acquaint the RAC with the BLM budget process with the aim to solicit RAC input on BLM priorities for 2006. Twinkle Thompson will work with Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson, on how to gather RAC advice. She will ask the RAC to review the 2005 budget priorities and identify what areas to emphasize or de-emphasize for 2006 budget.

Gregg Simmons, Statewide Planning and Environmental Coordinator, gave the RAC a demonstration of the **e-planning pilot project**. E-planning is a server based application that allows BLM employees to input land use planning information into a database. Members of the public will be able to go to BLM's web site and click on the e-planning link to view planning information and submit comments. Gregg's presentation showed how to access and use the e-planning web site. Once fully implemented, e-planning will facilitate public access to planning information and ability to track public comments.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Public Relations.** A RAC Notes bulletin was published on the Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative. Next bulletin will include results of the September 17th RAC meeting.

b. **Recreation.**

-- There is an effort ongoing to submit legislation to re-direct the Arizona OHV gas tax fund back to OHV programs vice the general fund

-- Work continues on coordinating an Adopt-a-Trail program with BLM and Forest Service

-- Middle Gila Conservation Partnership is into its 4th year. Subgroups have been formed to give more direction on priorities. Route inventory is completed and decision tree is being used to evaluate routes.

-- OHV community is looking to create a state-wide OHV organization to bring together OHV groups as well as OHV dealers.

c. Wild Horse and Burro.

-- The Working Group is awaiting direction priorities from the State Leadership Team.

-- Target adoption goal for FY 2003 will be met and use of the adopt-a-buddy program has increased adoption numbers by about 25 percent.

-- To help meet the AML, BLM is looking at re-programming funds from other sub activities to the Wild Horse and Burro Program.

-- The Wild Horse and Burro Foundation is now in place and may be able to assist with marketing.

d. Planning.

-- Two upcoming briefings will be given to the State Director on Sonoran Desert Scoping Report and Agua Fria Alternatives.

-- Gregg Simmons has offered to make these documents available to the RAC by CD as the files are too large for email.

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Lake Havasu City, AZ, December 4, 2003

On December 4th, a RAC business meeting was convened in Lake Havasu City at the Islander RV Resort. BLM Arizona State Director, Elaine Zielinski, welcomed the group

and thanked RAC member Rick Holloway for hosting the meeting in the beautiful setting of the Islander RV Resort. Elaine also welcomed the new RAC members who were recently appointed in October, 2003. Next, Elaine announced that John Christiansen, Kingman Field Manager, was re-locating to the Washington DC BLM office to be the bureau-wide lead for riparian and soils. She presented John a plaque in recognition of his accomplishments over the past 5 years.

Elaine's state director's report covered the following topics:

- **Border Issues:** Three day tour of southern Arizona public lands with multiple agencies; very enlightening; challenging and complex issues; cooperation is key.

- **Governor's Military Facilities Task Force:** The Task Force report to the Governor has 27 recommendations; one concerns need for land exchanges to deal with encroachment issues.

- **Appraisals Reorganization:** The appraisal functions of all Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies has been consolidated under DOI National Business Center.

- **2006 Budget Priorities:** Elaine thanked the RAC for their ideas and comments on Arizona BLM's priorities for 2006; a budget strategy team will review budget priorities and start the FY 2006 budget data call.

- **Grazing Regulatory Update:** The Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be published in December; public will have 60 days to provide comment.

- **Federal Highways Recreation Trails Program:** A grant of \$1.5 million will provide resources for OHV inventory, signage, and mapping on BLM, Forest Service, and State Trust Lands.

- **Middle Gila Conservation Partnership:**

The partnership has been meeting for three years and considering resource issues; an important issue is motorized recreation; federal and state agencies have tasked the Partnership to develop recommendations for the transportation network.

- **Blue Ribbon Commission:** The Commission was established to study the recent California wildfires and prepare recommendations to improve wildfire response and reduce impacts on residents.

- **Antiquities Act:** 100th year anniversary will occur in 2006; BLM will play a big part; Elaine welcomes the RAC's thoughts and suggestions for Arizona BLM's involvement.

Next, Don Ellsworth, Lake Havasu Field Manager, gave a presentation on recreation opportunities on the lower Colorado River. The area is noted for its beautiful desert scenery and good weather. Boating is a big draw. There are two main seasons of use. The summer period is big for water skiing. The winter period offers good weather and popular uses include sight-seeing, OHV, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, and fishing. BLM manages 15 concessions on the lake and has designated campsites that are only accessible by boat. Rick Holloway provided his perspective of the issues facing Lake Havasu and emphasized the need for the major players in the area to get together and prepare a cohesive resource management plan. There are a lot of water issues and various agencies are working their individual plans. He also cited the benefits of public-private partnerships and the large revenue source they provide.

Next, Ken Mahoney, BLM Wilderness Coordinator, gave an update on wilderness planning guidance. He discussed a draft Arizona BLM Instruction Memorandum which provides guidance concerning consideration of wilderness characteristics in the land use planning process. Information provided by the

public about wilderness characteristics will be considered along with all other resource information in the planning process. Through the planning process BLM may manage lands using special measures and prescriptions to protect wilderness characteristics. However, land use plans will not designate Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) nor manage any lands in addition to those already designated as WSAs under the non-impairment standard established by Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The draft memorandum contains wilderness planning criteria which should be used as the model for developing plan-specific criteria.

Next, Kirk Koch, BLM Lake Havasu Fisheries Project Coordinator, gave a video presentation on Lake Havasu's fisheries improvement project. In 1990 a group was formed to improve sport fisheries and access to shoreline. Hundreds of volunteers helped develop artificial fish habitats which over the years have boosted the numbers of bass, blue gill, crappie, and catfish. The habitats have benefited both game and native fishes.

The project also resulted in shoreline improvements such as docks, parking, rest rooms, and trails. Bottom line is the project improved the success rate for fisherman and thereby strengthened the local economy. Another plus is that the project came in under budget and ahead of schedule. BLM and its partners and volunteers can be proud of the great success achieved over the years with this project.

Next, the RAC reviewed the status of land use planning efforts across the state.

- Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw Foothills/Harquahala Land Use Plans. The alternative formulation stage is nearing completion. Development of the preferred alternative will begin in January,

2004. Major issues include diverse recreation impacts; increased demand for sand, gravel, and decorative rock; protection of riparian and cultural resources; hazardous materials and abandoned mines; access to public lands; land tenure; open space; and trash.

- Sonoran Desert National Monument and Phoenix South Land Use Plans. The scoping report was approved in September, 2003.

Extensive contact with other agencies and the public has been ongoing. Planning is scheduled to be completed in 2005.

- Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument/Vermillion Cliffs National Monument/Arizona Strip Field Office Land Use Plan. The scoping report was approved in September, 2002. The National Park Service and BLM staffs are writing the draft plan. Access and transportation are the major issues, particularly OHV use.

- Ironwood Forest National Monument Land Use Plan. The scoping report should be completed in January, 2004. Major issues include OHV use, grazing, target shooting, undocumented immigrants, transportation, user conflicts, public contact, and visitor expectations.

- Las Cienegas National Conservation Area Land Use Plan. The approved RMP and Record of Decision were signed in July, 2003. An implementation strategy is being developed with assistance of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership.

- Arizona Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Management. The Notice of Availability for the proposed amendment, finding of no significant impact, and environmental assessment should be published in December, 2003.

- Yuma Land Use Plan. Fiscal year 2004 is the initial year of funding for the Yuma RMP revision. The Preparation Plan which guides development of the RMP should be approved in January, 2004.

- San Pedro Riparian National Conservation

Area Land Use Plan. Fiscal year 2004 is the initial year of funding for the RMP. The Preparation Plan should be approved by February, 2004.

- Lake Havasu Land Use Plan. The alternative formulation stage is nearing completion. Don Ellsworth discussed issues identified in the scoping report, including access, additional boat ramps, trail system, wilderness areas, and split-estate lands. The OHV inventory is almost complete within the field office. Michael Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources, stated that normally route inventories were done before completion of the RMP. However, new guidance from the Washington Office allows the activity plan to identify specific route designations within a 5 year period following completion of the RMP.

During the Public Comment period, the RAC heard from various members of the public. Two individuals voiced the need for more non-motorized trails in the Lake Havasu field office. An official from Arizona Game and Fish discussed the growing need to offer recreational shooting facilities on public lands. Another individual who is a hunting guide and BLM permit holder stated some concerns over unduly restrictive and inconsistent permit conditions, including base camp locations and stay limits.

Next, the Tucson Field Manager, Shela McFarlin, presented her proposed members for the Las Cienegas Rangeland Resource Team (RRT). She gave a brief background and rationale for the proposed list of 9 members and 3 alternates. There was some discussion by the RAC on lack of a member representing OHV use. However, overall, the RAC was pleased with the list and approved the nominees.

During discussion of the Field Manager Reports, the issue of land acquisitions along the San Pedro River was raised by a RAC member. Concerns included lack of public input and unclear objectives. After some discussion, it was agreed that BLM would provide a more in-depth presentation on land acquisitions along the San Pedro River.

Next, the RAC discussed the composition of the RAC Working Groups. Each Chairperson described the purpose of their Working Group. This led to a discussion of how the working groups evolved and should there be changes. After much discussion, the RAC voted to establish the following 6 working groups: Standards and Guidelines for Grazing, Standards and Guidelines for OHV, Land Planning and Tenure, Recreation, Burros and Horses, and Public Relations.

Immediately following the RAC business meeting, the RAC and BLM staff conducted a boat tour of Lake Havasu. Don Ellsworth was the tour guide and discussed shoreline campsites, fisheries and recreation projects, and the adopt-a-campsite program. During the tour, the group stopped at a cove that receives heavy boat usage during the summer season and also visited a boat accessible BLM camp site. The tour was a great way to view BLM recreation sites and learn more concerning multi-agency water issues, impacts from recreational users, and management challenges faced by BLM and other agencies that have jurisdiction on Lake Havasu.

Next RAC Meeting Set for February 18, 2004

The Arizona RAC invites the public to attend its regularly scheduled RAC meetings. The next meeting will be held February 18, 2004, in Yuma, AZ. On February 19, the RAC will tour the Sears Point archaeological site to

learn more about its cultural resource values and associated resource protection issues.

RAC Membership

Following is the list of *newly-appointed, **reappointed and current RAC members, the category they represent, and their place of residence. Each member's terms are for 3-years, and are staggered.

Commodity Category (5 members)

*Ty Kelly, Grazing, Wickenburg, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Lee Aitken, Energy/Minerals, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

**Sandra McCullen, Off-Road Vehicle Use, Mesa, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Stephen Saway, Off-Road Vehicle Use, Sierra Vista, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Rick Holloway, Commercial Recreation, Lake Havasu City, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Non-Commodity Category (5 members)

Glendon Collins, Dispersed Recreation, Phoenix, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

William Branan, Environmental, Elgin, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Sanford Cohen, Dispersed Recreation, Prescott, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

*Tina Clark, Historical/Archaeology, Yuma, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Frances Werner, Dispersed Recreation, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Local Area Interests (5 members)

*Lawrence Nelson, Elected Official, Yuma, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

**Lorraine Eiler, Native American Tribes, Glendale, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Lamar Smith, Academia, Benson, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Mary Dahl, Public-At-Large, Rio Rico, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

*Peggy Titus, Public-At-Large, Mayer, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Richard Hubbard is the Governor's representative to the RAC. Frances Werner is chair for the Arizona RAC.

For Further Information

If you have any questions about the RAC, contact Deborah Stevens, BLM Public Affairs Specialist, at the BLM Arizona State Office, 222 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85004-2203, or call 602-417-9215. For the latest approved RAC Meeting Minutes, check BLM's External Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov

About RAC Notes

RAC Notes is published periodically by the RAC Public Relations Working Group to provide the public with information related to current RAC activities and public land issues. To get on the mailing list, please contact Deborah Stevens at (602) 417-9215 or e-mail to Deborah_Stevens@blm.gov.

The RAC Notes is also posted on the BLM Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov under the News/Resource Advisory Council button.

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